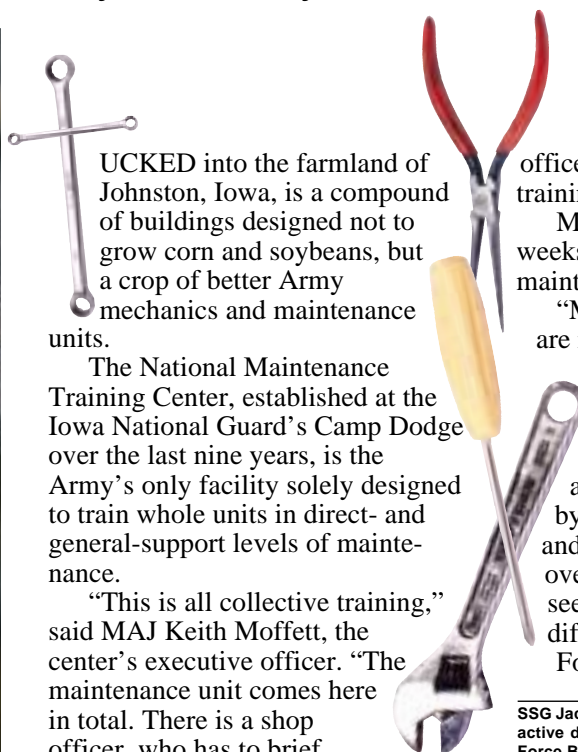


# NMTC THE NATIONAL MAINTENANCE



# MAINTENANCE TRAINING CENTER

Story and Photos by SSG Jack Siemieniec



UCKED into the farmland of Johnston, Iowa, is a compound of buildings designed not to grow corn and soybeans, but a crop of better Army mechanics and maintenance units.

The National Maintenance Training Center, established at the Iowa National Guard's Camp Dodge over the last nine years, is the Army's only facility solely designed to train whole units in direct- and general-support levels of maintenance.

"This is all collective training," said MAJ Keith Moffett, the center's executive officer. "The maintenance unit comes here in total. There is a shop officer, who has to brief everything going on in the shop. You've got warrant officers running the shop, NCOs supervising and the soldiers actually turning the wrenches."

Moffett said the center is a "turn-key operation." His staff, made up of Active Guard and Reserve and active-duty soldiers, facilitates things and is there to answer questions when the need arises. But it's up to the visiting units to take charge, schedule jobs, repair and rebuild vehicles and their components, order parts as needed and replenish existing stocks for the next group of soldiers to rotate through.

"Privates, sergeants, warrant

officers — the whole company is all training. It's all tied together," he said.

Moffett said the units arrive for two weeks of intense, no-distraction maintenance.

"Most of the units that come here are reserve-component," he said. "On their weekend training, a lot of them don't have time to get really involved with the maintenance aspect. If the unit comes and turns a vehicle in on Saturday, by the time they get it inspected and parts ordered, the weekend is over. The next month they have to see what parts came in. So it's very difficult for them."

For active-duty units, the center

SSG Jack Siemieniec is an Army Reservist currently on active duty with U.S. Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

**(Left)** Wisconsin Army Guard SGT Matthew Carroll of Co. B., 132nd FSB, caulks a patch he's just put on the undercarriage of a Humvee.

**(Right)** Tennessee Guard members SGT Athlee Maness (left) and SGT Robert Jarrett of the 779th Maint. Co. remove valve springs as they disassemble an engine.







**NMTC instructor CW2 Russell Boos (second from right) looks on as Tennessee Army Guard soldiers check the cam shaft injector timing on a Bradley fighting vehicle.**

offers a chance to work on equipment and components they might not normally see the rest of the year.

SFC Paul Vallarde is first sergeant of the 94th Maintenance Company at Fort Stewart, Ga., one of several active units that have used the facility.

“Back at Fort Stewart, we have five major components that we work on, including engines and transmissions,” Vallarde said. “On components like the M1 Abrams transmission, we don’t rebuild them because we don’t have the proper equipment.”

But Vallarde said the center offers more than equipment.

“The good thing is when you get here, you’re task-free,” he said. “That is, you have no other missions than to rebuild. Here we know that for two weeks straight all the soldiers are going to do is just turn wrenches, and you see the glow on their faces when they walk in these doors.”

Moffett said the work comes from a variety of customers, including the Army Materiel Command’s Tank Automotive and Armaments Command, the National Guard Bureau, the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., and the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La.

SGM Dennis Norton, the chief operations NCO for the Iowa center, said there are three types of maintenance — bay shop, job shop and assembly line. The NMTC covers the first two. He said units have no requirement to bring their own vehicles or tools.



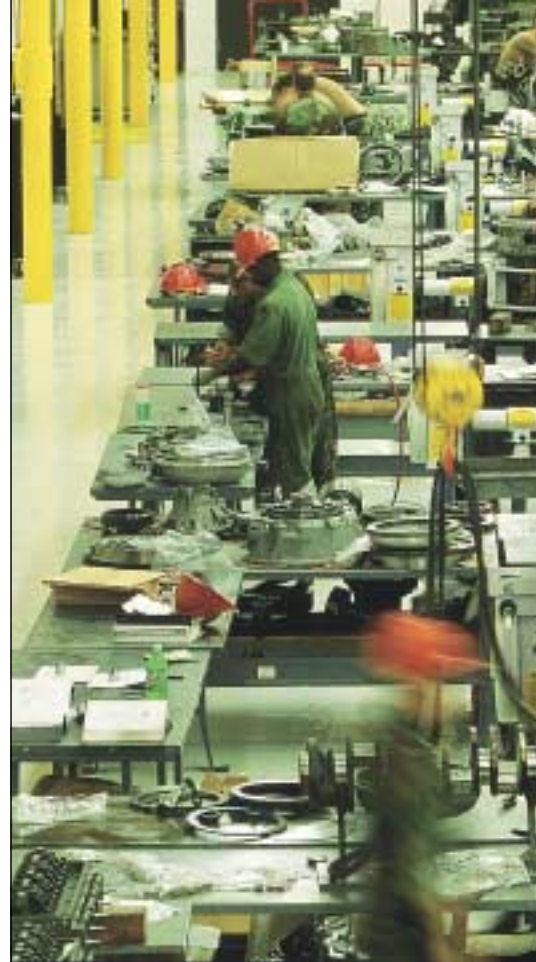
**SGT Awet Tesfagiorgis of the 94th Maint. Co. at Fort Stewart, Ga., machines a fuel filter neck on one of NMTC’s lathes.**

“The only thing they’re required to bring is their own personal protective equipment, such as safety glasses and safety boots,” he said.

The NMTC is a facility to train every aspect of direct and general support-level maintenance units. Its buildings house armament, optics, machine, welding, communication-electronics, and even fabric repair and paint shops.

Its bays hold anything from howitzers getting new recoil slides to tank transmissions being rebuilt.

Since its inception, the center has



*“Privates, sergeants, warrant officers — the whole company is all training. It’s all tied together.”*



trained more than 18,000 soldiers, spread over almost 200 units.

Norton said the center is part of a four-year training cycle designed to keep maintenance units proficient. The first year concentrates on individual soldier skills and personnel readiness at the unit level. The NMTC falls in the second year of the cycle, followed by a rotation at the NTC and culminating in an overseas or JRTC deployment. The next year the cycle restarts, because of personnel turnover.

While at the NMTC, the unit is evaluated on its performance, but only with regard to its work in the shops and bays and how soldiers meet the commander’s mission training plan.

“Units do get a training-assessment model,” Norton said. There is an





NMTC's general support maintenance bay shop area hums with a variety of work on any given training day.



Up-close and personal work is the norm at NMTC. Here a mechanic disassembles a Humvee gear hub spindle.



In NMTC's applied trades area, Wisconsin Army Guard soldier SPC Brooke Lysne sands a bumper before painting it.



SPC Paul Gregory (left) paints a rebuilt Humvee engine as SPC Bruce Bradford looks on. Both soldiers belong to the Fort Stewart-based 94th Maint. Co.

officer in charge in each shop, and they look at the unit and evaluate each section. But if the unit goes to the NTC, it gets evaluated on many items — such as how well the soldiers are setting up camouflage and fighting positions, and how well they're doing direct-support maintenance.

"Here, all they're getting evaluated on is their ability to perform direct

support and general support maintenance," Moffett explained.

Turner explained that while the active component has only four general support maintenance companies, the National Guard has 38.

The National Guard Bureau gave the Iowa Guard the mission to develop the lanes training concept.

The general support training center

opened in 1992, and the direct-support side followed in 1995.

"It's more beneficial for us to bring our unit here because the training is more realistic," said CW2 Harold Renfro, an automotive support technician with the Tennessee National Guard's 779th Maint. Co. "The staff here is super to work with and, if we don't understand a part of the training, they make sure we understand it before we leave."

LTC Harold Turner, the center's director, knows why units come here.

"Annual training is the prime-time training for Guard and Reserve units. So, many times, combat service support units go to what they call their annual training," he said.

"They do not go to annual training, they go to annual support," he added. "Here they come to annual training. This is the doctrinal baseline they get to come back to and say: 'I can always go support an exercise, but if I don't have my ability to do my doctrinal baseline mission, I have no other place to go.'" □

